



For a Family Friendly School, Steve Says . . .

Steve Constantino, principal of *Time* magazine's High School of the Year, challenged SIC members to use a new lens in the effort to involve students' families during his keynote address for the 16th Annual SIC Conference. He credits the innovative approaches used at Stonewall Jackson High School, Manassas, Virginia, as the reason the school was recognized. Constantino used the SIC conference theme, "The New American Family and the School," to share the journey taken by the students, families and faculty of Stonewall Jackson.

"Think family, not parent" Steve says. Many children live in a family that looks different from the traditional families from the middle of the last century. He points to data: only 17% of American families consist of a biological father and mother and approximately 2.5 children and a dog (the last said with a grin). We risk alienating 50% of our kids by the choice of a word – parent or family.

"Involve families in the academic life of their children" Steve says. He cited 35 years of research that supports the value of family involvement. He also cited data indicating that 98% of teachers want family support, but only 20% were willing to initiate it. Examples of the difference made at Stonewall Jackson HS when families were directly involved in the academic achievement of their students assured listeners he was talking about what was *being* done, not what we *should* be doing.

"Give parents better questions to ask" Steve says. Believing that the best thing families can do for their children is to establish a home-study environment, Stonewall set up a telephone system which allows parents to access weekly information about each of their students' classes. Homework problems improved at Stonewall when parents could call the school and receive a one-minute summary of the topic of the week, the specific homework, when the test would be given and when the grade would be available.

"Go places where families are," Steve says. Time is the number one barrier for families. Consider their competing priorities about work, family, and personal time. "They will get involved," he says, "in things that are significant."

"Parents care," Steve says. "Families want to know that the school cares too." Creating a culture where families and

faculty trust each other to care about the student is another barrier to overcome. He advised sharing what is known about the research on families with the faculty.

"Teachers must connect" Steve says. Families whose past experience with school was not good, pass on to their children questions about education and its value. Connecting faculty and families will help to set aside the uncertainty felt by many families.

Steve assured listeners that Stonewall wasn't a bad school and the students weren't bad kids when he arrived as principal (the eleventh in 10 years), but he did admit to problems. He put the family involvement model in place immediately starting with communications. A web site was created with information in English and Spanish. Families could ride a bus to the school for evening classes, and homework included notes for parents. "Kids need three things: to do well, to be safe, and to feel love" Steve says. "Schools are doing okay on the first two, but we need families and the community to achieve the third."



Keynote speaker, Steve Constantino, shares his knowledge with humor.

Riley Award Highlights Annual Conference

A couple regarded as legend in South Carolina, Former US Education Secretary and Governor Dick Riley and his wife, Tunky, were honored during a special luncheon

presentation at the 16th Annual SIC Conference in Columbia.

Mrs. Riley's eyes glistened with tears as SICA Board of Trustees Chair, Bob



Dick and Tunky Riley accept their award

Zuercher, told hundreds of SIC members that without the Rileys, "School Improvement Councils might not exist today and the voice of parents and community would be diminished."

Zuercher's speech described the Rileys' unique contributions to education in South Carolina and the nation. "Dick Riley had a vision of what was required to improve education for South Carolina, and he cultivated the grassroots support to achieve it. He understood the need to get the average citizen involved and excited about issues affecting our schools," said Zuercher. He went on to share with the Council members how Tunky Riley built support for the passage of the Education Improvement Act during countless local meetings. "No matter what the disagreements were, she led the way to common ground; the realization of the importance of our children and their education."

(see *Riley Award* on page 5)

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Parent Surveys Are Coming in April

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Parents will have an opportunity this year to complete a survey about their child's school and the results will be recorded on the School Report Card, 2002. Teachers and students completed surveys last year and the data was recorded on the 2001 Report Card. Teachers will be able to complete the survey online this year through the Department of Education's web site. Students in grades 5, 8, and 11 complete their surveys at school.

The survey was developed under the auspices of the Education Oversight Committee. Costs for printing, distributing, collecting and analyzing the surveys is the responsibility of the State Department of Education (SDE). Individual schools will be asked to send the survey home by students in grades 5, 8, and 11. Due to various grade configurations in schools, the survey is to go to parents of students in the highest grade in the school, but will not be distributed in K, 1, 2, 3 or grade 12.

The surveys will be delivered to schools during the third week of April. A letter from State Superintendent Inez Tenenbaum will accompany each survey. It is suggested that schools designate a collection bin for returned surveys to ensure anonymity. Parents also have the option to send the completed survey to the SDE. The school's identification number is printed on the surveys so the responses will be credited to the right school no matter which method of return parents choose. The surveys are to be returned by May 17.

SIC ACTION:

Alert parents about the survey; coming by their student on a specific date.

Explain the options for collecting the completed surveys.

Emphasize the importance of the survey and that honest responses are valued.

Assure parents that the results will be shared with them next fall.

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SIC State Meeting

May 2, 2002

7:00 – 8:00 p.m. on Channel 301
(schedule with your school media specialist)

- School Report Card Changes
- SIC Elections

TUNE IN at your local school to the live video
satellite broadcast via SCETV

QUESTIONS about these
topics?

Before the show, email:
sica@gwm.sc.edu

REPEAT BROADCAST
May 10, 2002 at 10:00 – 11:00 a.m. on Channel 326

During the show, call toll free:
1-800-768-0167

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SICs Grade School Report Card

SIC members attending the annual SIC Conference had the opportunity to complete a survey about the School Report Card. Those answering were evenly divided among schools with all five grades on the Report Card (70% were average, good, or excellent; 30% were below average or unsatisfactory). They represented elementary, middle, and high school levels.

The Report Card was clear and easy to read according to 73%, and 67% indicated they thought the Report Card information was easy to understand.

SIC members reported that Report Card discussions occurred at SIC meetings before it was distributed (88%), and again when it was sent out (80%).

The school planned information events for parents before the Report Card was distributed according to 65% and after it was sent out (64%).

The SIC had received the teacher and student survey results analysis from the SDE in 65% of the responses, and 66% reported having assisted the principal last year to write the narrative for the Report Card.

Two-thirds of the SIC members reported discussions before and after the Report Card was distributed and their school had planned activities for parents about the Report Card before and after distribution. SIC members from a school with a grade of Unsatisfactory consistently rated low in each of the areas questioned.

16th Annual Conference “The New American Family and The School” March 2, 2002



Brendon Barber (center) chats with Secretary and Mrs. Riley after his luncheon presentation on the language and culture of Gullah. Mr. Barber shared with the audience that Mrs. Riley's nickname, “Tunky,” comes from Gullah.



SICA Board of Trustees Chair, Bob Zuercher, presents the inaugural Riley Award.



SICA Executive Director, Jean Norman, presents keynoter Steve Constantino with a thank you gift.

Many Thanks to SIC Conference Supporters

The Board and staff of School Improvement Council Assistance give special thanks to Dr. Linda Nalty and Communities in Schools – SC for their generous support, which allowed us to bring you keynote speaker Steve Constantino. Thanks also to the Office of Parental and Community Partnerships at the SC Department of Education, which subsidized the cost of the canvas tote bags given to each conference attendee. Applause also goes to Brendon Barber, who donated his time to enchant us with his wonderful Gullah stories. We couldn't have done it without all of you!



SICA board member, Orlando Gonzalez, presents “Bridging the Hispanic Education Gap.”



The SIC Conference was held on Dr. Suess's 98th birthday and members of The SCEA were on hand to celebrate!



Sumter Police Chief and SICA board member, Patty Patterson, introduces Betsy Wolff, who made a presentation on “Establishing an Educational Foundation.”



Parents Anonymous was one of 14 information exhibits at the conference.



The Columbia Junior League provided “Smart Matters” incentive items for conference door prizes.

“No Child Left Behind Act” Impacts SC Accountability

New federal education legislation recently passed by Congress establishes criteria for student progress for every school in the country and ties that progress to funding. The emphasis is on broad expectations for all schools rather than targeted actions for groups of students.

The funding may turn out to be the largest increase ever for education; it is estimated that South Carolina could receive an additional \$74.2 million. OR it could be the smallest in recent history and the state would receive an estimated \$24 million. The difference exists in the process of stating a budget and actually getting the funds appropriated.

Characteristics of the Act include high standards and assessment, data and disaggregation by subgroups, report cards to inform the public, and is grounded in the concept that teachers and schools make a difference. Sounding very much like South Carolina's Education Accountability Act (EAA), we can exhale a little because several systems and requirements are already in place. However, there are some specific differences.

- * Performance standards are to apply to all schools, not just Title I schools (federal funds); and all students are to be proficient in 12 years.

- * Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) is defined as *all* schools and districts making gains to close the achievement gap for all subgroups of students; a minimum of 10% improvement toward 100% proficiency for each subgroup is required.

- * State and district plan is to indicate how highly qualified teachers and principals will be placed in schools by 2005.

- * Parents have the right to know the qualifications of their child's teacher for the subject being taught, and to be notified when the child has been taught for four or more consecutive weeks by an individual not highly qualified in the subject.

- * All new paraprofessionals hired with Title I funds as of January 2002 must have more than a high school diploma; current employees will have four years to meet this requirement.

- * Tough corrective actions for chronically failing Title I schools includes the right of students in these schools to transfer to a better public school or obtain supplemental tutoring services.

To read the entire Act and related information, visit the US Department of Education website www.ed.gov. To learn more about the impact of this law on SC read an expanded version of this article at www.ed.sc.edu/sica/publications.html

Need Handbooks?

Learn “The Basics” of convening your School Improvement Council. Call 1-800-868-2232 to order updated copies for every member of your council or visit www.ed.sc.edu/sica/sica.html to download a copy.



The state budget continues to be a primary concern in the SC General Assembly. The House has passed a budget bill; now the Senate will create their version. A conference committee consisting of three members from the House and three from the Senate will almost certainly decide the final budget, a compromise of the two bills. While education is expected to receive fewer cuts next year than other areas of state government, many districts are already anticipating layoffs due to midyear cuts this year. In the House version of the budget SICA would be cut approximately \$10,000.

CHIP, the state's children's health insurance plan, which provides insurance for children who would not otherwise have access to health care is likely to sustain major cuts. Poor health care can affect a child's ability to learn.

Another hot topic of discussion is allocation of lottery funds. The House supports \$60 million for K-12 to the Senate's \$9 million, while the Senate supports free technical college tuition and HOPE scholarships for those who do not qualify for LIFE scholarships, which the House did not fund. A conference committee has already been appointed to work out those and other differences between the two bodies. Education advocates have differing views, some want K-12 to share in the lottery bounty; others fear that legislators will come to depend on lottery funds instead of fully funding K-12 in the state budget, resulting in future budget crises should lottery proceeds drop.

Other actions at the State House include:

- H3968 “Diabetes School Care Act” would require non-medical school personnel to care for children with diabetes, including giving insulin shots. Some educators, concerned about liability, administrative, and cost issues, believe that having a nurse in every school would be a better way to properly deal with diabetes and other common, but serious illnesses.
- S992 “Uniform Beginning Date for Schools” was proposed by legislators from Horry County concerned that early August start dates in most SC schools harms the state's tourism industry.
- S923 would provide a referendum question during the 2002 election asking voters if the State Superintendent of Education should be appointed by the governor instead of being elected.
- H4737 would amend the current Multi-County Business Industry Park law to ensure that school districts receive their proportion of funds when economic incentive packages are created to encourage new business development.

To learn more about these proposed bills and others, visit www.scasa.org, www.scsba.org, and www.scstatehouse.net. And don't forget to let your legislators know how YOU feel about education legislation!

“Timing is Everything” in SIC Elections

Many South Carolina schools begin in early August. It follows that School Improvement Councils should be ready to work when school begins. SICs are encouraged to give serious consideration to the timing of elections, which can directly affect a Council’s ability to be effective in performing its duties. Here’s a sample of SIC activities in the first four months of school:

- SIC gets organized: elects officers, establishes committees, and submits members’ names and mailing addresses to district, which then submits them to SICA.
- Early activities include review of the school renewal plan and last year’s progress report. PACT data is distributed in late September and the analysis for the teacher, student, and parent surveys arrive in October.
- Prepare for the distribution of the School Report Card on November 1.
- Plan to write the report to the parents.

With this much work to do it is important that a full complement of members are ready to assume the SIC responsibilities at the beginning of the year. That means elections and appointments must occur early in the school year or even in the previous spring. According to current state law, the deadline for Council elections is October 15. The school district then has until November 15 to send the names and addresses of council members to SICA.

SICA strongly encourages local SICs to hold their elections early and get their membership list to the district immediately following the elections.

FALL or SPRING ELECTIONS?

FALL

Elections – August

Returning SIC members follow their bylaws or written guidelines about election procedures for nomination and voting for members. The most common practice for electing teacher members is to conduct balloting at a faculty meeting. Several practices are used to elect parents: nominations during school registration, followed by introductions and balloting at “Back to School Night” or Open House or first meeting of the parent-teacher organization or send ballots by the student or mail. Student members are elected at regular class and student government elections. Outgoing members of the SIC may monitor the voting procedure for each membership category.

Electing officers and committees named – September

Following SIC elections in August, all members meet and elect their officers: a chair, and a recorder (secretary) at minimum. Membership and designated chairs of committees are named and assignments made. Now the SIC is ready to work – and it’s early September.

SPRING

Elections – May

Teacher and student elections occur in the same manner as described above. Parent elections occur at the final PTA/O meeting or other end-of-year activity attended by large numbers of parents, or ballots are sent home by mail or by students. Bylaws will guide the procedures for nominations, elections, balloting, and record keeping. Spring elections give the new Council time to work together over the summer months, preparing, planning, develop as a cohesive group, and hit the ground running in the fall!

SICA Action Timeline



MAY

- Compile progress report about each school improvement plan strategy.
- Conduct planning sessions with parents and community members.
- Draft recommendations for the annual update on the improvement plan.
- Conduct elections for new SIC members.
- Identify and recruit community members to serve on the SIC next year.
- Distribute to parents information about the improvement plan revision. (Applies only to schools visited by an External Review Team this year.)

JUNE-JULY

- Complete Report Card narrative with the principal.
- Submit recommendations for school improvement plan update.
- If SIC was elected in May, elect officers.
- Review and revise bylaws as needed.
- Plan with the principal and faculty to assist with the opening of school.

Riley Award

(continued from page 1)

Secretary Riley addressed the group, thanking them for all their hard work around the state. Echoing the conference theme, “The New American Family and the School,” he encouraged SICs to be innovative to help keep pace with the changing nature of families and their children. He urged Council members to take a close look at how quality afterschool programs could make a positive difference in their children’s academic achievement.

The audience was delighted when Mrs. Riley, who does not often speak publicly, took the podium. She thanked SICs for their contribution to our schools and for honoring her in this way. Education, and community involvement in education, she said, has always been her passion.

The SICA Board of Trustees created the “Dick and Tunky Riley School Improvement Award” in their honor, which will be given annually to recognize the work of exceptional School Improvement Councils. Watch for details in the Back to School 2002 issue of the SICA News to find out how your School Improvement Council can be nominated for the Riley Award.

Changing Racial Make-up of SC Schools

The rapidly changing racial make-up of SC public schools presents exciting new challenges as schools strive to be culturally sensitive and ensure a quality education for all students. The following is 2001 report from the State Department of Education.

| | |
|------------------------|---------|
| American Indian | 1,621 |
| Asian/Pacific Islander | 6,496 |
| Hispanic | 12,807 |
| Black | 284,890 |
| White | 371,534 |
| Race not reported | 2,376 |
| | |
| TOTAL: | 679,724 |

Quality Counts 2002

South Carolina continues to make improvements in education according to *EDUCATION WEEK*, which has released its yearly report, Quality Counts 2002. The report grades all fifty states and the District of Columbia on a variety of indicators affecting student achievement. South Carolina received a “B+” in Standards and Accountability; “B” in Improving Teacher Quality; “B-” in Adequacy of Resources; and “C” in Equity of Resources. To view the entire report and see how our state rates compared to others, visit www.edweek.org.

EOC Names New Chair

The SC Education Oversight Committee elected Bob Staton as their new chairman during the December 20, 2001 meeting. Mr. Staton, former CEO of Colonial Life Insurance, is a charter member of the EOC and chairs the EIA and Improvement Mechanism Subcommittee. He replaces Bill Barnet who stepped down as chair following his election as mayor of Spartanburg.

EOC Makes Report Card Changes

The SC Education Oversight Committee has made some changes to the school report cards. The Composite Grade, which appeared on the front of last year’s report card was a computation of the Absolute and Improvement Ratings, which were found on the inside of the report card. Next year, there will be no Composite Grade and both the Absolute and Improvement Ratings will appear on the front of the report card. Some data related to student subgroups will also be included on the front page. To learn more about changes on the Report Card, be sure to tune in to the SIC State Meeting on May 2! (See page 2.)

State Board Approves ERT Reports

The State Board of Education has approved evaluation and improvement recommendations from External Review Teams for 73 SC schools. The schools were identified based on their 2000 PACT scores. Schools rated as unsatisfactory on the December report card will also be visited ERTs. Visit www.myschools.com to view the ERT reports and learn more.